

# THE INDYPENDENT

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## BEDTIME FOR BONZO

A LIFE IN PICTURES, ROCK AGAINST RONNIE, REAGAN VS. THE EXORCIST, PAGES 8-11

## WHEN I LIKED REAGAN

By JOHN TARLETON

MICHAEL LITRICH

I was 18 when Ronald Reagan bombed Libya. It was 1986 and Big Ron was kicking ass again, just like in Grenada. Sitting in back of my English 101 class, I listened impatiently as our teaching assistant, an earnest woman with straight black hair, led a discussion of the previous night's events. She criticized Reagan for killing innocent civilians (including Moammar Gadhafi's adopted 1-year-old daughter) and violating international law.

"C'mon," I snorted. "We did what we had to do. We have to defend ourselves when we're attacked." Most other guys in my class were of the same mind. It was that kind of decade. Not unlike the one in which we're currently living. And Reagan has everything to do with that.

After defeat in Vietnam and the confusion of the Carter years, Americans wanted to feel strong and righteous once again. Memory was a burden. Rambo was the rage. Military spending soared. Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA" topped the charts, presumably because no one

was paying any attention to the lyrics, which bore the lament of a disillusioned Vietnam vet ("Got in a little hometown jam/So they put a rifle in my hand/Sent me off to a foreign land/ to go and kill the yellow man") returning home to a dying factory town.

By crushing tiny countries like Grenada, Libya and Nicaragua, the Gipper showed Americans they could be winners once again. Reagan cheerfully embodied the ideal of "American exceptionalism" – the rather extraordinary notion that we are uniquely virtuous among all the peoples of the world and that while other nations' actions may be driven by venal self-interest, our government's actions abroad are motivated only by the highest of ideals. According to this unstated creed, whatever we desire is "good." Anyone who opposes us is "evil." And people who question this are "America-haters."

Under Bush Jr., exceptionalism has evolved into unilateralism. A perpetual "war on terror" and the catastrophe in Iraq are a fulfillment of Reagan's perverse idealism. Between My Lai and Abu Ghraib were years of careful-

ly cultivated forgetting. Vietnam was no longer an indiscriminate slaughter of several million people who looked and thought differently than us but a "noble cause" that had been betrayed by un-American protesters and equivocating politicians.

Pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into new weapons systems, Reagan restored a messianic belief in the force of American arms. When Bush and company launched their invasion of Iraq, they expected to be greeted warmly by locals awed by both their power and their moral goodness. It hasn't worked out that way.

Ironically, all those new Tomahawk cruise missiles, Patriot missiles, M-1 tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Apache helicopters and Aegis air-defense cruisers that Reagan helped provide haven't made the United States safer – just more easily tempted to launch a war where it can be defeated by people armed with rocket propelled grenades and homemade bombs.

Now, former Reagan-era officials like John Negroponte and Elliott Abrams, who played key roles in the Central American wars of the 1980s that left 200,000 people dead in three countries, are overseeing the U.S. counter-insurgency in Iraq.

Negroponte's past record as Ambassador to Honduras was barely mentioned during recent Senate confirmation hearings and he was approved for his new post as Ambassador to Iraq by a vote of 95-3. The forgetting continues. One can only wonder at the suffering that lays ahead.



## NEW YORK CITY INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

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### WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to illuminate and analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

*The Independent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

### VOLUNTEER STAFF:

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PHOTO: FRITZ ASKEW

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

# june

### THE INDEPENDENT

has open meetings every Tuesday, 7pm at 34 E. 29 St., 2nd floor.

### SAT JUNE 19

10a.m.-2 p.m.: 3-7 p.m. Free  
*Street Theater Workshops*  
Theaters Against War (THAW) is planning workshops in: agitprop, invisible theatre, image theater, drumming, spoken word, costume making and mask making. Also invited: a speaker from the National Lawyers Guild to provide legal information about performing in the streets. No theater experience necessary.  
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Hunter College  
4th floor, Hunter West  
68th St. & Lexington Ave,  
[www.thawaction.org](http://www.thawaction.org)

11 a.m. Free  
*Bridge the Health Care Gap - National Day of Protest & Walk Across the Brooklyn Bridge*  
"From the Golden Gate Bridge to the Brooklyn Bridge, we are taking to the streets to send the message that every man, woman and child in America must have quality, affordable health care we can all count on."  
[www.bridgingthegapforhealthcare.org](http://www.bridgingthegapforhealthcare.org)

2 p.m. Free  
*Save the Blocks Party*  
A Brooklyn community stands up to developer Bruce Ratner and the municipal machine - and everyone is invited to partake in the fun. Time's Up departs for the rally from Union Square at 2 p.m. Popular Brooklyn musical acts and DJs include: The French Kicks, DJ Scribe (Love Revolution), Eman (Bang the Party), DJ Dhundee (Sugar Cuts), Gamall (Rude Movements), Touch It Crew. Special Guests: MC Enemy, The

Spunk Lads.  
Pacific Street btw 5th & 6th Ave,  
Prospect Heights, Brooklyn,  
[www.developdontdestroy.com](http://www.developdontdestroy.com)

### SUN JUNE 20

12:30-2:30 p.m. Free  
*Summer Ice Skating*  
Free ice skating at Chelsea Piers this and every Sunday.  
The Sky Rink  
23rd St. & the Hudson River  
212-336-6100

1:15-3:45 p.m. Free  
*Resistance Cinema*  
*Presents Two Documentary Films Dealing With U.S. Policy in the Philippines*  
Basilan: Siklab Ng Digma (Sparks of War) and Savage Acts: Wars, Fairs, and Empire 1898-1904.  
Community Church of NYC, 40 East 35th St. at Park Ave,  
[www.nyc.notinourname.net](http://www.nyc.notinourname.net)

4 p.m. - 6 p.m. free  
*Anarchist Soccer*  
Fun, supportive pick up games for all skill levels. Every Sunday.  
Tompkins Sq. Park by Ave B

7 p.m. \$5 suggested  
*When Bush Comes to Shove: Organizing Strategies from the Global South*  
Learn about grassroots strategies in Central America to resist Bush's destructive free trade and immigration policies. Featuring Guadalupe Erazo of the Popular Social Bloc for Real Democracy of El Salvador.  
Bluestockings Bookstore & Cafe  
172 Allen St,  
[www.bluestockings.com](http://www.bluestockings.com)

### MON JUNE 21

dusk, free  
*Movie: American Graffiti*  
Free movies on Bryant Park lawn at dusk, every Monday for the summer.  
Bryant Park, between 40th & 42nd St. and 5th & 6th Ave.  
[www.bryantpark.org](http://www.bryantpark.org)

### TUES JUNE 22

6:30-7 p.m. Free  
*1st Amendment Mob*  
Every Tuesday, gather at the WTC Path station to recite the 1st Amendment into your cell phone.  
NE corner Ground Zero, Church St. train entrance,  
[www.revilly.com](http://www.revilly.com)

### WED JUNE 23

5:30 p.m. Free  
*LEGAL OBSERVER TRAINING FOR THE RNC*  
The National Lawyers Guild is conducting trainings of legal observers to prepare for the RNC.  
99 Hudson Street, 3rd floor, RSVP to [rnclo@resist.ca](mailto:rnclo@resist.ca)  
212-679-6018 ext 15,  
[www.nlgny.org](http://www.nlgny.org)

### THU JUNE 24

7 p.m. Free (vegan meal incl.)  
*The Secret Blackout Cafe Opening*  
An exhibition addressing the spontaneous community and camaraderie that emerged during the August 2003 NYC blackout. On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.  
156 Rivington St  
[www.abcnorio.org](http://www.abcnorio.org)

7:30 p.m. \$6-\$10 suggested  
*The Politics of Gay Marriage*  
A dialogue seeking to take stock of the debate on gay/lesbian marriage, including its various social implications, the impact on electoral politics, the argument against marriage as exclusively heterosexual, and how leftists have positioned themselves in the debate. Featuring Lisa Duggan, Richard Kim, Carmen Vasquez & Richard Goldstein. Moderated by Angela Dillard. Sponsored by The Nation and Brecht Forum.  
122 W. 27 St., 10th Fl.

### FRI JUNE 25

7 pm Free  
*Critical Mass*  
Bikers reclaim the streets. Last Friday of every month. Meet at Union Square North,  
[www.times-up.org/cm.php](http://www.times-up.org/cm.php)

9 p.m. \$7  
*Rooftop Films: Home Movies*  
Movies remembered and mis-remembered.  
The Old American Can Factory, 232 Third Street  
Park Slope, Brooklyn,  
[www.rooftopfilms.com](http://www.rooftopfilms.com)

### SAT JUNE 26

11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Free  
*Chelsea Block Fair & Fiesta*  
The Chelsea Coalition On Housing is a grassroots non-profit housing organization that has held this fair for over 35 years. Vendors, arts & crafts for children, delicious homemade latin food, a 10 piece salsa band, and a DJ. West 17th Street in Chelsea, btw 8th and 9th Ave, contact: [napaviles@aol.com](mailto:napaviles@aol.com)

2 p.m.-6 p.m. Free  
*Coney Island Mermaid Parade*  
Celebrate the sand, the sea, the salt air and the beginning of summer as well as the history and mythology of Coney Island. Starts on Boardwalk by the Cyclone  
[www.coneyisland.com/mermaid](http://www.coneyisland.com/mermaid)

### SUN JUNE 27

5-11 p.m., \$5-\$10 sliding scale  
*Punk Rock Prom - Benefit for ABC No Rio Building Renovation Fund*  
Get dressed up, bring a date or two, and support the NYC DIY scene. With: Piss Death, Pank Shovel, Hot Sauce, Back2n8. OfficeOps, 57 Thames St, 2nd floor (between Morgan & Knickerbocker Aves), East Williamsburg, Brooklyn,  
[www.abcnorio.org](http://www.abcnorio.org)

[www.officeops.org](http://www.officeops.org)

### MON JUNE 28

7 p.m. Free  
*Reading of Moving Mountains: The Race to Treat Global AIDS*  
Film and reading of Anne-Christine D'Adesky's book from the front lines of the AIDS crisis, featuring lively dispatches from India, Russia, Haiti, South Africa, and many other countries and charting in depth the worldwide situation.  
Bluestockings, 172 Allen St,  
[www.bluestockings.com](http://www.bluestockings.com)

### TUES JUNE 29

9 a.m. free  
*Pack the Court for the APOC Trial*  
Jury selection begins for the trial of the arrestees of the November 16th NYPD attack on the Anarchist People of Color party at Critical Resistance. Pack the courts in solidarity. Brooklyn Criminal Court, Jury Room One, 120 Schermerhorn St. in Brooklyn, Critical Resistance 718-398-2825

### WED JUNE 30

7:30 P.M. Free  
*Democracy Now's Amy Goodman Discusses Her New Book The Exception To The Rules: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, And The Media That Love Them.*  
Barnes and Noble, Broadway at 82nd St, 212 362 8835

**TO LIST AN EVENT:**  
[indy\\_listings@yahoo.com](mailto:indy_listings@yahoo.com)

**TO SUBSCRIBE:**  
[indysubs@yahoo.com](mailto:indysubs@yahoo.com)

# 'BUSHVILLE' BUSTED

## COPS TEAR DOWN JERSEY CITY ENCAMPMENT BUILT TO PROTEST REPUBLICAN REGIME

BY ANDY HARRIS & MATT WASSERMAN

Don't bother checking the real estate listings for New Jersey's youngest village. It's already disappeared. "Bushville," which was built June 1 by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWURU), sat in an abandoned lot across from a Dunkin' Donuts in Jersey City. The tiny community consisted of two ramshackle tents — one medical and one dormitory — and a kitchen shack. It seemed harmless, but Jersey City Police deemed it threatening enough to tear down.

"It's a fire hazard," remarked one officer, who refused to give his name. "This is private property. None of these lots down here are abandoned."

Bushville was no ordinary encampment. It is one of many projects that KWURU has organized since 1995 to raise awareness of poverty issues. Its residents were demanding "economic human rights": housing, health-care, education and a living wage.

KWURU's past actions include marches, building tent cities and free food distribution. In Philadelphia, they organized a "Ridgeville" and a "Clintonville" leading to takeovers of abandoned buildings to house residents. During the 2000 Republican National Convention, an earlier version of Bushville was a center of activism.

From the beginning, the Bushville in Jersey City was the subject of police harassment. Local police officers greeted tent city residents on June 2 by threatening to turn their children over to child services. The same day, the Jersey City Police Department towed three of the protesters' cars while NYPD officers observed from the Dunkin' Donuts across the street. The Bushville residents got their cars back by the middle of the day after revealing inaccuracies in police reporting of the incident. However, their equipment, which includes children's toys and camping gear, is currently being held by order of the Jersey City Police. KWURU is being charged \$150 per day for storage of the seized equipment.

But the harassment didn't stop there. Two days after it was built, nearly a dozen officers from the Jersey City Police arrived at 12:30 a.m. with a dump truck and orders to break down and haul away the encampment, evicting the two dozen people living there. Four members of KWURU were charged with "posting signs without authorization."

"I don't know why they can't just leave them alone," said onlooker Elena Gonzalez. "They ain't even using that property."

Activist Rocco Rosanio stresses the importance of making the issue visible,



PHOTOS: IRINA IVANOVA

**FROM TOP:** Three residents of the short-lived shantytown settle into their new home, just before they got the boot. **ABOVE:** Bushville's communal kitchen.

whatever the cost. "This is an issue of people turning away more than of not seeing it. If people realized, they'd want to take steps in their own lives."

KWURU built a second Bushville June 14 under the Jersey Turnpike and were quickly shut down by state troopers.

Activist Tim Dowlin vows that "no matter how many times we're harassed by the

police, Bushville is going to happen. All we have is our voice, and they're trying to take that away." Dowlin says that Bushvilles may be set up in various boroughs of New York City depending on what happens in the coming weeks. KWURU is determined to maintain a presence in the New York area in the months leading up to the Republican National Convention.

**RNC  
WATCH  
.org**

### CITY POLS PUSH RIGHT TO ASSEMBLY

City Council's governmental operations committee approved the Right to Assemble Resolution June 16 by a vote of 5-0 with one abstention. The proposed resolution calls on city officials to respect the 1st Amendment rights of protesters at the Republican National Convention this summer. The resolution, which has 19 co-sponsors, will come before the full council in late June.

The vote followed a public hearing in which representatives from the New York Civil Liberties Union and United for Peace and Justice, a major anti-war coalition, testified in front of a standing room only crowd of over 75 people.

Five members of the New York congressional delegation are also urging Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the city police to respect the rights of protesters. Rep. Major Owens (D-NY) has authored a Memorandum of Understanding that he plans to present to Bloomberg. It is co-signed by Representatives Elliot Engel, Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler and Edolphus Towns.

Two prominent right-wing groups, the Christian Defense Coalition and the National Clergy Council, have sued the city for placing unconstitutional restrictions on peaceful demonstrations and prayer vigils during the RNC.

### LESS THAN ADVERTISED?

Still think that the Republican Convention will be a big financial boon to the city? You might want to think again. According to an economic analysis by the Beacon Hill Institute at Suffolk University, "the Republican National Convention in New York City will generate only \$184 million in economic activity, rather than the \$260 million claimed by the city's administration." And that's not all. The Institute notes that this estimate does not take into account the so-far unannounced security measures New York will be taking this summer. Not only that, but the city itself will be forced to pay for cleaning up after the Republicans as well as for police overtime.

Even worse could be the convention's harmful impact on small business owners in Manhattan, especially those around Madison Square Garden.

### 'SHOUT HEARD ROUND THE WORLD'

In a post to the *NYC.Indymedia.org* newswire, some New Yorkers have called for coordinated direct action on Aug. 31 at 11 a.m. at the Republican National Convention. The call titled "Shout Heard Round the World" says in part: "We are people who work for a living. We are students, we are retirees. We are caregivers, builders, teachers, dreamers. We're the people who fight the wars, who pay taxes, who have lost our jobs. We lost loved ones on September 11th. We want to take democracy from the Halliburtons and Enrons and bring it back to town halls, schools, and neighborhoods."

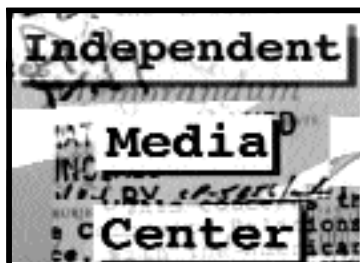
### NO RNC IN 30 SECONDS

Filmmakers connected with the Hudson Mohawk Independent Media Center have just released a 30-second video PSA about the upcoming protests and have launched the NoRNC Spot campaign. Filmmakers are encouraged to make 30-second video PSA's (a la Bush in 30 Seconds) that will be assembled for a DVD/VHS compilation and be screened at micro-cinemas across the country in the lead-up to the convention. The deadline is July 12. Email: [norncspot@hotmail.com](mailto:norncspot@hotmail.com)

### NO RNC POSTER PROJECT

And some of New York's coolest radical artists have organized the NoRNC Poster Project in order to "create a visual blitz in New York City against Bush and the Convention, and to blend art with politics in the finest New York style."

For more info: [www.noRNCposters.org](http://www.noRNCposters.org)



**BLACKED-OUT MEDIA**  
IS A PROJECT OF THE NYC  
INDYMEDIA VIDEO COLLECTIVE.

This provocative half-hour weekly news series appears on the Manhattan Neighborhood Network ([www.mnn.org](http://www.mnn.org)) Saturdays at 9:30 p.m. on channel 34, basic cable. The show is expanding to Brooklyn Community Access (BCAT), and will make its national premiere on Free Speech TV on May 31, 6 p.m.



TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BLACKED-OUT MEDIA OR NYC INDYMEDIA VIDEO, CALL 212-684-8112 OR E-MAIL [MEDIABLITZ@RISEUP.NET](mailto:MEDIABLITZ@RISEUP.NET).



# TESTING FAILS ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

By ANDY HARRIS & MATTHEW WASSERMAN

While students across New York State prepared for hours of Regents exams, students at Beacon High School sat down for personal interviews with their teachers.

Science students described the forces at work in a roller coaster model they built. Foreign-language students gave presentations in French about what they would do in three days in Paris. And students in Nathan Turner's Contemporary America class talked about their research into issues like gun control and drug addiction.

Most public schools rely on the state-mandated Regents exams to evaluate students. But Beacon, located in Manhattan, is one of 28 alternative high schools in the state participating in the Performance Standards Consortium's (PSC) system of evaluation. These schools use a mix of student portfolios, teacher evaluations, and oral

and written examinations to assess students.

The alternative schools were granted a waiver from the Regents in 1995. However, current Commissioner Richard Mills revoked this waiver in 2001. Eleventh grade students in performance standard schools will be the first ones required to pass all five Regents exams in order to graduate. Ironically, forcing these students to pass the Regents may undermine the performance the standardized testing is said to promote.

The alternative high schools have more poor students, more students of color and more students considered to be in danger of dropping out than the school system as a whole, yet their dropout rate is less than half the statewide average. In addition, the schools send 91 percent of their students to college, as opposed to the city average of 62.6 percent.

But teachers and students are struggling to find the time to prepare for the Regents while following the performance assessment

model. Many PSC schools have had to change their curricula, and several schools have dropped out of the consortium since their waiver was revoked.

Advocates of performance standards argue that their standards are higher than those of the Regents, evaluating a deeper kind of knowledge and holding students more accountable for their own development.

"If a student can sit in front of a college professor they've never seen before and defend their work, you know they're ready for college," says Nathan Turner, who teaches history at Beacon.

## TEACHING TO THE TEST

High stakes testing – the practice of using educational decisions on a single test score – has become common across the country during the last decade. As test results determine more and more aspects of a school, including teachers' jobs and school funding, a culture of "teaching to the test" has become the norm.

"For some schools, test scores have become more important than students," says PSC Co-Chair Ann Cook.

Dropout rates have increased in many states since they moved to high-stakes testing, and students are being encouraged to transfer to GED programs as early as the eighth grade. In New York, the four-year graduation rate dropped from 66 percent to less than 58 percent since the late eighties and the number of New York City youth enrolled in GED programs increased by nearly 50 percent in the past two years.

Statewide, around 35 percent of black and Latino students graduate in four years as opposed to 75 percent of white students, the largest gap in the nation. Jane Hirschmann, co-chair of Time Out From Testing, a statewide coalition that advocates the abolition of high-stakes testing, says the tests are reminiscent of the educational discrimination challenged in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

## TESTING FACTORIES

All of these statistics, says Cook, are symptomatic of a larger trend where "high-stakes testing is turning schools into test prep factories." Cook thinks that is one reason why students are doing badly on tests and leaving school.

Teaching to the test, say critics, makes students disinterested and less likely to retain knowledge. The type of inquiry-based learning used in performance assessment, they say, is a more effective way to teach students and gives them learning skills they can apply to their lives.

Turner says he teaches his history students analytical skills that address "real issues that historians have to deal with."

He describes a class session where he talked about his experience at a protest. Students responded by asking about the types of unions involved and their relation to labor strategies in the Gilded Age. "You don't get that if you just know that the Sherman Anti-Trust Act was passed in 1890," says Turner.

A group of historians and journalists evaluating the Global History and Geography Regents exam concluded that only an impossible whirlwind tour of world history could prepare students for the types of "trivial" knowledge assessed by the tests.

Such a tour, says Beacon freshman Douglas Raymond, "undermines a student's individuality" by simplifying knowledge to a test grade and focusing on facts, dates and statistics. In performance assessment, says Raymond, "teachers really work with you" and "you get more of a chance to see what you need to work on individually."

## SAVING THE CHILDREN FROM LITERATURE

In June 2002, Jeanne Heifetz, the step-parent of a New York City senior, discovered that state education officials had been censoring the literary excerpts used in the English Regents. Despite promising to stop sanitizing excerpts, test makers were caught altering material on the next two Regents.—AH & MW

Some censored excerpts (material in brackets deleted):

**From a speech by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to the Commonwealth Club of California:**

Polls "show strong American support for the organization at the grass-roots level [regardless of what is said and done on Capitol Hill]." "The United States is the biggest debtor, as is well known."

**Matthew Arnold, *Dover Beach*:**

Original: "Ah, [love], let us be true."  
Regents: "Ah, friend, let us be true."

**Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird*:**

"Whoa - they're not getting married after all! [She's gay!] And you had no idea!"

# DISSIDENTS FIGHT MOBBED-UP UNION



LONGSHOREMAN from Local 1235 unload cargo at the Port of Red Hook. PHOTO: IRINA IVANOVA

I walked into the Holiday Inn at the Newark airport where Local 1235 of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) was voting on a "master contract" for the 15,000-member union. It was 3 p.m. One of the ballot boxes was open and some representatives from the Local's election committee were sorting through the paper ballots. There were about a dozen members of the election committee in the cramped conference room. I asked to speak to someone about the contract ratification. "Talk to the boss," one election committee member said, pointing to Al Cernadas. President of Local 1235, he had taken the day off to oversee the vote with his election committee.

And the "boss," attired in a finely fitted dark blue suit, had a lot to be happy about. It was June 8, Al Cernadas's birthday, and a stream of well-wishers fell over themselves to greet him with handshakes, backslaps and kisses on the cheek.

BY BENNET BAUMER

Cernadas was also probably pleased that earlier in the year he had escaped being indicted with seven other ILA union leaders for ties to organized crime.

At the Holiday Inn, no third party mediated the voting and locks did not appear on some ballot boxes. I asked Cernadas if the voting had ended. Referring to the union members, he said, "Oh no, they have until 6pm to vote." Putting his arm around me, Cernadas steered me toward the other end of the room from the open ballot box.

Elections in the ILA are not often contentious. Dissidents in the union say a history of mob influence has a way of silencing opposition on the waterfront.

Yet union officials are sweating over a rolling rank-and-file movement from New York to Florida that is roiling the labor peace.

Many union members say the contract creates a two-tiered wage and health insurance system. Public opposition to the contract in New York and New Jersey area ports is limited to a handful of members. Talking to union members, however, discontent appears to be widespread, but no one is willing to give their name for fear of retribution and loss of work hours.

"This contract is infested with cuts... [and] we've made concessions in the past. I've been told by many in New York and Jersey that they are afraid to go against the contract because they know they'll be blackballed or worse if they're successful," said Leonard Riley, a member of Local 1422 in South Carolina.

When the vote concluded in the evening, according to eyewitnesses, three union members who arrived to observe the count were told by Cernadas, "Get the fuck out of here." Cernadas only relented when presented with a letter from the international union stating members could observe the election process.

The rank-and-file activists watched the count, but no tally was given. "Call the international," said Cernadas in reference to mem-

bers' requests for the election result. Cernadas also serves as a top international union official.

When asked about the vote breakdown, ILA spokesman Jim McNamara said, "You gotta take the locals." He did say that the master contract covering every ILA port passed 5,084 to 3,920.

Understandably, what ILA officials are also hesitant to breakdown is the history of mob influence both in the international and many locals. In 2003, Bayonne Local 1588 President John Timpanaro and six other union officials were indicted on a kickback for hire scheme. Before Timpanaro, the government convicted the two top Bayonne union officials of embezzling union funds.

In 2001, reputed Genovese crime family member Joseph Lore, who once threatened to blowtorch union officials' crotches if they defied him, was convicted of conspiracy to embezzle. Lore inherited the union from gangster and former boxer John DiGilio who was found floating in the Hackensack River in 1988 with two bullets in the back of his head.

When pressed about mafia influence in the union, Cernadas paused momentarily and said, "No Comment." Standing up, he patted me on the back as he announced, "The interview is over."

During a racketeering trial last year, George Barone, a "Made Man" in the Genovese Family and veteran longshoreman tough, fingered Cernadas as being an associate of alleged Genovese Capo Larry Ricci. Barone also implicated Cernadas as part of an effort to extort money from the union's health fund, according to the *Newark Star-Ledger*.

On the other side of the tracks, longshore members greeted each other warmly and milled around Newark Local 1233's union hall. Inside the musty, wood-paneled lobby, a framed portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., hung next to a glass case with Polaroids of retirees stretching back two decades.

"I had a guy in my office with over 47 years and he'll have a pension worth almost

\$90,000," commented Local 1233 business agent Herbert Hall.

ILA members received a generous pension increase over the six-year life of the contract, which, as Leonard Riley sees it, is supposed to mollify members for lower entry-level wages.

Hall sees it as a positive. "You can't price a guy out too early, what's he going to earn 20-25 years from now [and] can the market bear that?"

Health insurance is also a hot topic and union members who work under 700 hours will not earn health benefits. According to rank-and-filers, the healthcare fund faces a projected deficit of more than \$700 million over the life of the contract.

"It's a contract that sets up multiple tiers and sets workers against each other. There's no excuse for an industry like ours to have people go without insurance," said an East coast longshoreman who wished not to be identified.

East coast longshoremen's average salary, health benefits and guaranteed weekly work hours are inferior to their West coast counterparts and union cultures contrast greatly. At a time when both coasts handle hundreds of billions of dollars worth of cargo, East coast longshoremen wonder why entry-level wages are so low. New hires out West earn more than \$22 compared to only \$16 in the east.

In addition to being hindered by corruption, the ILA has lost thousands of members to mechanization in recent decades and thus considerable power. The early days of militancy and then mob domination of the waterfront starting in the 1930s passed the union a long time ago.

The ILA stands as a divided union. Union locals in New York and New Jersey are separated by race, and the industry is set up so that regions, ports and workers compete against each other for business.

Outside the fence that surrounds the idle Global Terminals in Jersey, which handles roughly three ships a week that take 24 hours to unload, opponents of the contract sat in banged-up cars and made calls to other union activists for vote tallies. You can always tell how many hours a longshore member worked based on the condition of the car.

Global Terminals is owned by Hong Kong-based Oriental Overseas Container Lines and its letters "OOCL" mark thousands of containers sitting in ports. Its parent company boasted record profits of \$329 million last year and its former CEO C.H. Tung is now Beijing's governor in Hong Kong.

As estimated tallies were phoned in, one union activist climbed a container strapped onto a railroad cart. From the top he could barely see into hazy Manhattan's financial district that houses the ILA headquarters. To the other side, the port's towering multi-colored cranes loomed over the Jersey waterways in silence.

## NYC IN BRIEF

### CITY SUED OVER NYPD'S AGGRESSIVE PROTEST TACTICS

Closing arguments in the New York Civil Liberties Union's lawsuit against the City's policing of demonstrations are scheduled for June 17. The lawsuit seeks a federal injunction barring the NYPD from using specific "crowd control" tactics: the denial of public access to demonstrations through the use of barricades and street closures, the use of horses to forcefully disperse peacefully assembled demonstrators, the use of interlocking metal pens to confine demonstrators, and the mandatory bag searches of demonstrators. Judge Robert Sweet should release a decision by the end of the month.

### MORGENTHAU: FREE THE WEED FOR THOSE IN NEED

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau has become the first New York law enforcement official to endorse legalizing medicinal marijuana. "It should be available to those whose suffering would be eased by the use of marijuana," Morgenthau said during a June 15 news conference. "There is absolutely no reason for not using marijuana for medical purposes."

Morgenthau's endorsement came just hours before a medical marijuana bill proposed by Assemblyman Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan) passed the Ways and Means Committee. The bill still has no sponsors in the Republican-dominated State Senate. Morgenthau said talking with TV talk-show host Montel Williams, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, helped him see the good in grass.

### NYC CARIBBEAN TEACHERS SET TO LOSE THEIR VISAS

Nearly 200 Caribbean teachers – mostly Jamaicans and Guyanese – will lose their jobs June 30 due to stringent new visa laws, according to a recent report in *The Weekly Gleaner*. "This demands community and political response as the New York Board of Education is acting with insensitivity," said Irwine Claire, one of the architects of the plan to recruit Caribbean teachers into the school system.

### COMMUNITY BOARD DEFIES COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Community Board 9 has a plan for West Harlem – one that doesn't involve buckling under to Columbia University. After a year of collaboration with the Pratt Institute's public interest planning center and the grassroots group Coalition to Preserve Community, a committee of CB9 has completed a draft of a zoning and land use proposal for the area. Once the board accepts the plan, they will submit it to the city, where it will go head-to-head with Columbia's competing rezoning proposal. Then the big decisions rest with the city: it will either accept Columbia's plan, allowing the University to begin construction on nearly 20 acres of 30-story buildings, or it will accept the proposal.

### DEVELOPMENT PLANS MEET COMMUNITY OPPOSITION

NY Assembly speaker Sheldon Silver has called for public hearings to examine Gov. George Pataki's \$7 billion proposal to use eminent domain to expand the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center on Manhattan's west side. Meanwhile, activists at Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn are fighting another giant corporate development proposed in the name of public interest: Bruce Ratner's proposed stadium project, which would level 13 acres of existing Brooklyn homes and businesses.

## TAKING THE PROFIT OUT OF WAR

By ANN SCHNEIDER

**N**ow that Vice President Dick Cheney's role in approving the no-bid \$7 billion war contract to Halliburton is known, it's a good time to recycle an old idea. During World War I and the Korean War, Congress imposed an Excess Profits Tax against war profiteers.

According to Ann Fagan Ginger of the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute in Berkeley, Calif., by the end of World War I an Excess Profits Tax on war contracts accounted for 59 percent of government revenue. During World War II, it brought in about 23 percent of the total federal revenue. Economists look to the prior year to determine what amount of profit is "excess." Public outrage about war profiteering led to a 100 percent tax on excess profits during the Korean War.

On April 8 last year, the Berkeley City Council unanimously passed a resolution calling upon Congress to pass an Excess Profits Tax on all wartime and post-war contracts. On May 20, the Oakland City Council followed suit. The same week in 2003, the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council passed a resolution calling for a 100 percent tax on all excess profits from the Iraq war and reconstruction.

The origins of the Excess Profits Tax are in the anti-trust movement at the end of the 19th century. Sen. "Fighting Bob" LaFollette led the effort to adopt it during World War I. In the 1930s, Sen. Russell Nye conducted hearings exposing defective equipment provided under war contracts and the enormous profits made.

While the 1950 law is a complex maze of accounting systems and IRS codes, it was successful. Last year at city council hearings held in Oakland, Korean War veteran John Shively testified, "I remember when President Eisenhower terminated the Excess Profits Tax at the end of that war. I also remember what happened to the American economy after the tax was terminated. The country went into a recession. Corporations had been trying to minimize their excess profits taxes by reinvesting in their companies to upgrade their production facilities, and make capital improvements, all putting money back into America. After the tax, they pocketed the excess profits."

Congress enacted a similar tax in 1980 during the gasoline shortage called the Crude Oil Windfall Profit Tax Act, which raised half a billion dollars in the four years it was in effect.

Under the U.S. Constitution, all appropriations for war can last only two years, thereby requiring all contracts to be renegotiated at the end of the two years. This would make them subject to a new tax, if passed by Congress.

Proponents of an Excess Profits Tax may cite President Franklin Roosevelt for support. On July 1, 1940, he told Congress: "We are engaged in a great national effort to build up our national defenses to meet any and every potential attack... It is our duty to see that the burden is equitably distributed according to ability to pay so that a few do not gain from the sacrifices of the many."

For more info go to [www.mcli.org](http://www.mcli.org).

The People's Lawyer is a project of the National Lawyers Guild, New York City Chapter. Contact us at [www.nlgny.org](http://www.nlgny.org) or at (212) 679-6018.

### HOMELAND INSECURITY

## FULL COURT PRESS IN STEWART CASE

Since the mid-nineties, *Newsday* reporter Patricia Hurtado has covered attorney Lynne Stewart as she has gone to bat for political prisoners and terror suspects. So when the courts scheduled Stewart's own criminal indictment to begin on June 21, everyone at *Newsday* assumed Hurtado would be the reporter on the story.

By MARGARET HUNT GRAM

**B**ut now, the federal government is trying to drag Hurtado out of the press room and onto the witness stand — effectively disqualifying the most qualified reporter for the job.

In the first week of June the federal government served Hurtado with a subpoena requiring that she testify about a 1997 interview she conducted with Stewart.

"For a journalist who is covering the trial — and needs to maintain the appearance of impartiality in order to effectively do the job of covering the trial — turning into a witness for one side is extremely problematic," said Stephanie Abrutyn, *Newsday's* in-house counsel.

Two *New York Times* writers and one Reuters reporter, who have also conducted interviews with Stewart in the past 10 years, have also received subpoenas.

If the subpoenas are upheld, their testimony will become part of the government's case, which accuses Stewart of providing "material assistance" to her client Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman after he was convicted in 1995 of supporting terrorist plots. It will also go on record as one of the first major cases in the second circuit where reporters have been required to testify against their sources.

But George Freeman, in-house counsel for *The New York Times*, maintains that requiring a reporter to testify against a source infringes upon the constitutional freedom of the press.

"People won't speak to [reporters] if they think their words are going to be repeated against them in court," he said. "Reporters really shouldn't be legal assistants for the government, they should be able to cover the news."

*Newsday* plans to file a motion this week to quash Hurtado's subpoena. The *Times* and Reuters have already filed such motions.

Lucy Daglish, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, notes that because the second circuit has been relatively respectful of the "reporter's privilege," an interpretation of the First Amendment that allows journalists to maintain the confidentiality of their sources, the judge is likely to throw out the subpoenas.

But since September 11, increasing numbers of journalists have been required to testify in every circuit.

Kevin Goldberg, counsel for the American Society of Newspaper Editors, sees a link between the subpoenas in the Lynne Stewart case and John Ashcroft's notorious anti-terrorism legislation



Lynne Stewart

"There are provisions in the USA Patriot Act that conceivably make it very easy for the government to trample on First Amendment rights," Goldberg told a Reuters reporter. "The really dangerous precedent I'm seeing from this case is the increasing reliance on journalists to be an investigatory arm of the government."

Testimony in the trial of Lynne Stewart will begin in New York City on June 22 at the United States District Court, Southern District of New York (40 Foley Square), at 9:30 in Courtroom 110. Stewart asks that supporters pack the courtroom.

Legal information about reporter's privilege is available from the RCFP at [www.rcfp.org/privilege](http://www.rcfp.org/privilege).

Information about Stewart's defense is available at [www.lynnestewart.org](http://www.lynnestewart.org)

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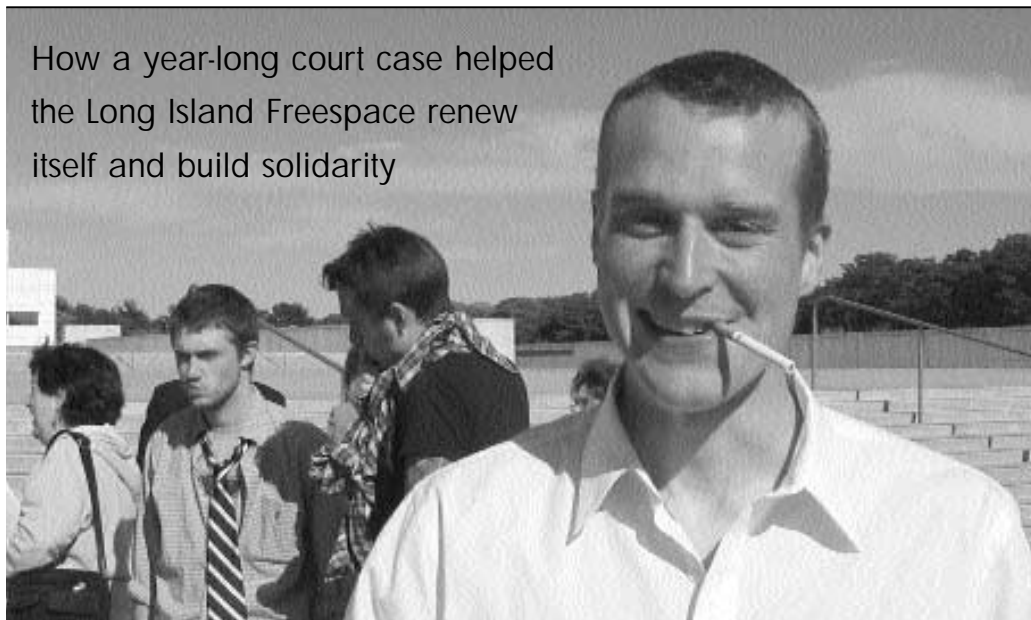
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How a year-long court case helped the Long Island Freespace renew itself and build solidarity



CONOR CASH celebrates his acquittal on three charges of politically-motivated arson.

# STRONG ISLAND RISING

Civil rights attorney Fred Brewington huddled in the hallway outside a Long Island courtroom with friends and supporters of his client, Conor Cash, a local activist charged with being the kingpin of an environmentalist arson ring. "This is a major, major move for this judge!" Brewington told the crowd of dozens of supporters there. They had just heard Judge Thomas Platt rule that the prosecutor's key piece of evidence, a videotape of Cash getting gas at a Hess station, could not be shown to the jury.

BY ERIC LAURSEN

Bright sunlight streamed through the plate-glass sheath of the Alphonse M. D'Amato Federal Courthouse in Central Islip on May 20 as Brewington assessed what had just happened. The videotape appeared to be different from the one that prosecutors had given to Cash's attorneys during discovery. It seemed to contain images doctored to emphasize Cash's presence at the Hess station, even though there was no indication he was planning anything illegal.

Not only was the tape stricken, but the judge's ruling gave the jurors something else to deliberate on: that the prosecutors had been using tainted evidence to convict Cash.

Platt's ruling shattered a three-and-a-half-year effort by the FBI, the U.S. Attorney and Suffolk County police to disrupt an activist community that was bringing direct-action politics and a variety of mutual aid projects to one of the most conservative places in America. It could have sent the 22-year-old Cash to jail for as long as 80 years.

Later that day, instead, the jury came back with a verdict: Not guilty on all three counts. Cash walked out of the courthouse free.

In the weeks since then, members of the Long Island Free Space have been trying to assess the trial's impact on their community: the price it exacted and how it may have helped change their direction as activists. The Freespace is an anomaly – an experiment in bringing an anti-authoritarian, participatory style of organizing to Long Island's expanse of suburban homes, malls and cozy Republican Party machines. Far from disrupting its efforts though, the ordeal of seeing one of its members targeted and pursued for years by the authorities seems to have

strengthened the Freespace and even helped to widen its circle of supporters.

Some Freespace members missed work and risked being fired to sit in court after Brewington appealed to them to make a strong presence during the two-week trial. Two SUNY Stony Brook graduate students, Chris Jensen and Gabi Moisan, organized a program to bring meals to the attendees and make dinner for Cash's family during the trial.

Some members who have had personal or political disagreements, and even stopped speaking to each other during the past few years, found themselves working together again. Older, liberal activists who had sometimes kept their distance from the Freespace's culture of punk rock, bicycles and vegan cuisine, showed up for Cash's trial and contributed to the meals program.

The Freespace's support for the Workplace Project in Hempstead, a Latino rights group that helps Long Island's growing and often abused population of immigrant day laborers, was also paid back as the project's entire office staff took a day off to attend the trial.

Long Island's anti-authoritarian community may have been strengthened by the three-and-a-half-year witch-hunt, but it has changed a lot too. While trying to convict Cash of conspiracy to commit arson, the FBI and prosecutors surveilled Freespace members and attempted to turn them into informers. They offered deals to the two young men who actually participated in a series of arson incidents in December 2000 in exchange for helping to convict Cash of being their ringleader. One is now in jail, his deal revoked, because of an instant message he sent to an animal rights activist saying that Cash is innocent.

Kevin Van Meter, the Freespace's only full-time employee besides Cash, stopped doing

direct action trainings to avoid casting his friend's case in the wrong light. And the Freespace constituted itself as a mutual aid and radical education project seeking grants and mainstream support, toning down the anarchist ideology. Mutual aid means a program that supplies refurbished bicycles to day laborers and others who can't otherwise get around on car-happy Long Island, a free guitar project for kids who can't afford to buy one, an educational women's project, plus a free booking service for punk/hardcore shows.

The new approach is taking root in a suburban setting where the idea of direct action is mostly greeted with incomprehension, but where many young people are desperate for alternatives to the strip-malls and multiplexes. On Long Island, Van Meter observes, community is everything. "We're not in New York, where there are a hundred different groups organizing around various things," he says. "You are it when you're here. In the city and other places, there are too many excuses not to build a substantial community."

Now that the trial is over, the Freespace's next goal is to secure a lease on a storefront it found close to the Huntington train station to host classes, performances and later perhaps an independent media center. And despite its evolution away from explicit anarchism, Freespace veterans are anxious to get back to political activism. This summer, just before the Republican convention in New York, they plan to hold an educational "counterconvention" on the political issues raised – and ignored – by the two-party system.

Freespace activists – a few years older, more experienced and still determined to build a liberated community – are finding a new sense of permanence. Van Meter and a half-dozen other members have formed a writing group to collect information about the government's attempts to pin acts of eco-sabotage on Cash and the extent of FBI surveillance and dirty tricks against Long Island activists. Perhaps the biggest challenge will be to convey the wave of feeling when the jury cleared their friend of the charges.

Cash, who quietly endured the two-week trial that determined the rest of his life, wrote in an email message to his friends and supporters the day after the verdict:

"Through this, I got to see what we really have, and how very successful we've been in creating the community we talk about, and that the alternative we strive for is alive and well between us."

## ANIMAL RIGHTS' MILITANTS INDICTED FOR WEBSITE

FROM THE NYC INDYMEDIA NEWSWIRE

Federal agents in four states on Wednesday arrested seven activists with Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) and charged them with a multi-year conspiracy to terrorize Huntingdon Life Sciences, which has labs in New Jersey. The charge carries up to three years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Arrested Wednesday were Joshua Harper, Kevin Kjonas, Laurant Gazzola, Jacob Conroy, Darius Fullmer, John McGee, and Andrew Stepanian.

A poster to our open newswire writes that "obviously, these Federal fools think arresting a handful of aboveground activists like Josh Harper will somehow stop the campaign to close HLS and stop the torture... An earlier attempt to stop SHAC with stay-away orders, etc led to a 500% increase in ALF actions aimed at HLS-related targets."

The case in question has important free-speech implications. U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie said the indictment "cites inflammatory Web postings by SHAC that crossed the line from free speech to criminality. 'We believe that the conduct they've engaged in is not a lawful exercise of their First Amendment rights,' he said. 'People were frightened by what was being done to them. It's no question that it created an atmosphere of fear.'"

## BUFFALO ARTIST CHARGED WITH 'BIOTERRORISM' FOR ART INSTALLATION

BY IRINA IVANOVA

A federal grand jury is considering indicting a Buffalo man on bio-terrorism charges after he was found in possession of petri dishes that contained household bacteria.

Steven Kurtz, an artist and professor at SUNY Buffalo, called 911 after his wife died of a heart attack May 11. Police arriving on the scene were alarmed to find petri dishes and other scientific equipment in his home and alerted the FBI. After a criminal search warrant was obtained under the USA Patriot Act, agents from the Joint Bioterrorism Task Force spent parts of two days searching Kurtz's home. They seized the body of Kurtz's wife as well as his computers, science equipment, parts of his personal library, teaching files, ID, and research on a new book.

Kurtz is a member of the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), a small group of artists that is "dedicated to exploring the intersections between art, technology, radical politics and critical theory," according to its website. Kurtz had been working on an exhibit that included the seized petri dishes.

The three strains of bacteria found in Kurtz's home posed "no health risk in or around the house," according to the NY State Health Department. The FBI has not revealed any other evidence it may have.

Several demonstrations have taken place in Buffalo and other cities to protest Kurtz's case.

Eight other artists from the CAE have been subpoenaed along with Kurtz. The US Attorney has refused to comment on the case. Kurtz's lawyer Paul Cambria suspects politics are driving the investigation. They are zeroing in on his message," Cambria told The Scientist. "I know that because they're looking at past things that he's written and so on, and they're trying to use that to circumstantially show that he's some kind of terrorist, which is kind of ridiculous."

## HUMAN WRONGS

Reagan provided military aid to the government of El Salvador, whose death squads massacred 30,000 civilians, raped and murdered nuns, killed priests, and assassinated the country's archbishop in church. The death squads dumped so many bodies at one spot outside the nation's capital that the vultures there got too fat to fly.

He supported military assistance to Argentina, despite that regime's murder of 30,000 civilians.

He provided loans to Chile under dictator Augusto Pinochet, despite his history of torturing and killing thousands of dissidents.

"Can we abandon this country (South Africa under apartheid) that has stood beside us in every war we've ever fought?" (They hadn't.)

The Voting Rights Acts of 1965, the Gipper said in 1980, had been "humiliating to the South." "I would have voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964," he said in 1966.

Reagan financed the Contra guerrillas against the democratically elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The civil war claimed 30,000 lives, with the Contras killing teachers and nurses in rural areas and taking money from cocaine wholesalers. He called the Contras "the moral equivalent of America's Founding Fathers."

## AIN'T NO WAR LIKE CLASS WAR

On August 5, 1981, he fired 11,359 air-traffic controllers who were on strike, breaking their union (which had endorsed him in 1980). He kept the minimum wage frozen at \$3.35 an hour for eight years. While cutting taxes on the rich, he raised the Social Security tax. He also made unemployment benefits taxable. "Unemployment insurance is a prepaid vacation for freeloaders," he said. During the 1982 recession, unemployment rose to more than 10 percent, the highest level since the Depression.



1948: CHESTERFIELD AD



1967: MAD MAGAZINE SPOOF



# RAYGUN HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

## VOODOO ECONOMICS

National debt increased approximately 450 percent from the time Reagan took office until his successor, George H. W. Bush, left office.

Reagan's budget director David Stockman acknowledged that the 1981 tax cut, skewed heavily toward the rich, was intended to starve the government of funds in order to justify further cuts in social spending.

Prior to being chosen as his running mate in 1980, Bush referred to Reagan's plans to balance the budget by cutting taxes and increasing military spending as "Voodoo economics."

Reagan's deregulation of the savings and loan industry resulted in massive fraud with taxpayers coughing up hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out the industry.

## MAKING NEW FRIENDS

On August 11, 1984, Reagan announced on the radio: "My fellow Americans, I'm pleased to tell you today that I've just signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." (The Gipper thought he was just doing a mic check.)

"Well I learned a lot... I went down to (Latin America) to find out from them and (learn) their views. You'd be surprised. They're all individual countries," after visiting the region in 1982.

"It's silly talking about how many years we will have to spend in the jungles of Vietnam when we could pave the whole country and put parking strips on it and still be home by Christmas." (Oct. 10, 1965)

Speaking of South Africa's apartheid government in 1985, Reagan said: "They have eliminated the segregation that we once had in our own country."

## JUST SAY NO

Under Reagan, the Nixon-spawned "war on drugs" emphasized imprisonment.

Funds for treatment were slashed as the number of Americans imprisoned for drugs increased dramatically. First Lady Nancy Reagan's solution? "Just say no."

Reagan imposed mandatory minimum sentences – a five-year minimum for growing 100 or more pot plants or possessing about \$250 worth of crack.

Since Reagan took office, the number of people in prison or jail in the United States has quadrupled, to more than 2 million. Homelessness was virtually nonexistent before Reagan. He cut federal housing funds by 75 percent. "What we have found

## THE GAY DISEASE

By the time Reagan first mentioned AIDS publicly in 1987, over 19,000 Americans had already died of what he was reported to call "the gay disease." "Maybe the Lord brought down this plague [because] illicit sex is against the Ten Commandments," he said in 1989.

Reagan's Secretary of Education insisted that all prevention education focus solely on abstinence.

Reagan supported a constitutional ban on all abortion procedures "except when the life of the mother is threatened."

Under Reagan, the U.S. cast the single vote against a World Health Organization code for infant formula.

# ROCK AGAINST RONNIE

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

The 1980s weren't all about yuppies. In the hardcore-punk scene, Ronald Reagan was considered the incarnation of all that was evil and wrong about America. (Jello Biafra's seminal 1981 compilation, *Let Them Eat Jellybeans*, featured a cover photo of Reagan grimacing from John Hinckley's bullets.) Meanwhile on the jazz-funk side, poet Gil Scott-Heron laid down some devastating critiques.

There are also two songs titled "I Shot Reagan": a 1983 album track from L.A. gangsta-punk Suicidal Tendencies, and a 1998 12-inch from Brooklyn occult hip-hopppers Non Phixion.

8. **"Reagan Youth,"** Reagan Youth. Four kids from Queens, "We are Reagan youth/Sieg Heil."

7. **"Overkill," False Prophets.** OK, I was the bass player, but who else has summed Reagan up in one line better than "Mumble to senility, believe in overkill"?

6. **"Re-Ron," Gil Scott-Heron.** "Would we take Jesse Jackson? Hell, we'd take Michael Jackson."

5. **"Bonzo Goes to Bitburg"** (a.k.a. **"My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down"**), the **Ramones**. Joey Ramone wrote this in 1985 after Reagan's visit to a Nazi cemetery.

4. **"Fucked Up Ronnie," D.O.A.** From Canada's finest punk band, four chords and four words: "You're fucked up, Ronnie."

3. **"Hinckley Had a Vision," the Crucifixus.** From Michigan, the most outrageous band name/song title pairing of the punk era, featuring Doc Dart's vacuum-cleaner yowl: "I want to take the President, chop off his head, and mail it to them in a garbage bag! Hinckley had a vision."

2. **"Kill the Poor,"** Dead Kennedys. Not specifically about Reagan, but captured his era's ethos perfectly, over a punkified doo-wop melody: "Convinced the liberals it's OK/So let's get dressed and dance away the night/While we kill kill kill kill kill the poor."

1. **"B Movie," Gil Scott-Heron.** "The first thing I want to say is, 'Mandate, my ass!'" Then the bassline kicks in with a funky clank, and Scott-Heron goes on to devastate Reagan for seven minutes, "from Bonzo to Birchite to Born Again." If he'd phrased his vocals less jazzily and more percussively, this would've been an early hip-hop classic.







# BORN IN THE USSR

THE 'EVIL EMPIRE' REVISITED

By IRINA IVANOVA

Of all the myths about Reagan floating around in the rose-colored eulogies of late, perhaps my personal favorite is the one touted as his greatest accomplishment: He won the Cold War. Or, in the words of a woman I spoke to at a candlelight vigil for Reagan, "he defeated the Evil Empire."

Having spent the first six years of my life in the Soviet Union, I have few personal memories, and more testimonies of my parents, but nowhere among them are the words "evil" or "empire." It was more like "inadequate," "ineffective," often "incomprehensible."

The USSR officially went out of business in 1991 – nearly three years after Reagan left the stand. He is credited with putting into motion the foreign policy that led to its eventual collapse. The truth is, Reagan did no more and no less than other American presidents by simply creating something for the USSR to compete with. And allow me to raise an issue of terminology: you cannot "defeat" someone you are not actually combating. You can engage in a showing-off contest and see which of you looks more impressive. However, Reagan is credited with dismantling the Soviet political and economic structure, not just the unsurprising fact that the United States was the one looking more impressive at the end.

In fact, the fall of the USSR can be traced to the nature of Soviet-style communism. It was not a sustainable economic system because it denied any selfishness on the part of humans; it was even less sustainable politically because of the extreme authoritarianism it required. A government that creates unhappy people with insufficient food and close to no mobility who have to tolerate bureaucratic difficulties to procure the most basic of necessities will eventually fall – especially when its totalitarianism is loosened, as during glasnost.

Giving Soviet communism a moral classification did two things: it secured Reagan the overwhelming support of the American people, who, in the spirit of our Puritan founders and Hollywood masterminds, still like to view the world in terms of good and evil, and as a result, gave him free rein in foreign policy.

Anything was permissible, as long as it was done in the name of democracy and anti-communism, and the United States' many military excursions of the eighties are directly related to this public mindset.

The Cold War was not a struggle for ideology. No one who does not currently believe in communism's viability believed in it a decade ago. The Cold War was a power contest and by the time Reagan came along, the USSR was obviously losing its grip, helped along by no one but its own unsustainable foundation.

Putting Soviet communism in the context of morality saddens me, because calling something "evil" necessitates placing blame. To me, an entity like the USSR cannot be called evil; that gives it too much agency. In my mind, the USSR had three distinct components. The first were the people who populated it, subject to the country's unlivable conditions. The second were the men who governed it, alternately striving for personal success, as do most people, and success of the incredibly difficult entity that was the Soviet Union. The third was the ultimately flawed ideology of Leninism, on which the whole thing was based.

Which of the three should I blame?

The phrase "He won the Cold War" presumes that in Reagan's time, there was a war to be won, and not a country slowly collapsing as the rest of the world looked on.



## REAGAN'S AMERICA

# NOT COLORBLIND, JUST BLIND

If one needs any more evidence that whites and people of color live in two totally different places, just look at the visual evidence provided by the death of Ronald Reagan. While people of color make up approximately 30 percent of the population of the United States, the Reagan faithful look like another country altogether. As they gathered in Simi Valley – home of the 40th President's library, as well as the jury that thought nothing of the police beating of Rodney King – one wonders if they noticed the incongruity between themselves and the rest of the state in which they live: a state called California, where people like them are slightly less than half the population now.

By TIM WISE

Doubtful. Most of them, after all, are quite used to never seeing black and brown folks, since the vast majority of whites live in communities with virtually no people of color around them.

What white folks ignore, but what most black folks can never forget, is how Reagan opposed the Civil Rights Act at the time of its passage, calling it an unwarranted intrusion on the rights of business, and never repudiated his former stand.

Or that as Governor of California, Reagan dismissed the struggle for fair and open housing, by saying that blacks were just "making trouble" and had no intention of moving into mostly white neighborhoods.

Perhaps they have a hard time forgetting that of all the places Reagan could have begun his campaign for the Presidency in 1980, he had to choose Philadelphia, Mississippi, a town famous only for the 1964 murder of three civil rights workers. And perhaps they recall that the focus of his speech that day was "state's rights," a long-

standing white code for rolling back civil rights gains and longing for the days of segregation.

Maybe they have burned in their memories the way Reagan attacked welfare programs with stories of "strapping young bucks" buying T-Bone steaks, while hardworking taxpayers could only afford hamburger, or how Reagan fabricated a story about a "welfare queen" from Chicago with 80 names, 30 addresses, and 12 Social Security cards, receiving more than \$150,000 in tax-free income. That Reagan picked Chicago as the site of this entirely fictional woman, and not some mostly white rural area where there were plenty of welfare recipients too, was hardly lost on African-Americans.

Perhaps black folks and other people of color remember the words of former Reagan Education Secretary Terrell Bell, who noted in his memoir how racial slurs were common among the "Great Communicator's" White House staffers, including common references to "Martin Lucifer Coon" and "sand niggers."

Perhaps they recall that Reagan supported tax exemptions for schools that discriminated openly against blacks.

Or how Reagan opposed sanctions against the racist South African regime, and even denied that apartheid, under which system blacks could not vote, was racist, noting that its policies were "more tribal than racial."

And it isn't surprising that few if any Salvadorans or Guatemalans who came to the United States in the 1980s, fleeing from violence in their countries, were to be seen placing flowers outside Reagan's library either.

Many of them no doubt recall how Reagan brushed off the genocidal policies of Guatemalan dictator Rios Montt – whose scorched-earth tactics, especially against the nation's indigenous resulted in at least 70,000 deaths – by saying he was getting a "bum rap" on human rights, and was instead a man of "great personal commitment" who was dedicated to "social justice."

That whites would view much of this as irrelevant is only proof positive that for many such folks the opinions of black and brown persons is of secondary importance to the fact that Reagan – as many have been gushing – "made them feel good again."

By 1980, most whites were already tiring of civil rights and were looking for someone who would take their minds off such troubling concepts as racism and instead implore them to "greatness," however defined, "pride," however defined, and flag waving.

Having to grapple with the real world is stressful and people with relative power and privilege never know how to deal with stress very well. As such, they long for and applaud easy answers for the stress that occasionally manages to intrude upon their lives, so they blame people of color for high taxes, failing schools, crime, drugs and jobs they didn't get; they blame terrorism on "evil" and the notion that they hate our freedoms: a belief one can only have if one really thinks one lives in a free country in the first place.

In other words, delusion is the fuel that both propels someone like Ronald Reagan forward in political life, and then makes a rational assessment of his legacy impossible upon his death.

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# 'WE BEGIN BOMBING IN FIVE MINUTES'

By A.K. GUPTA

**B**elieve what you want about Reagan, but there is one fact his disciples can not deny: His administration put humanity on the brink of annihilation by promoting the idea of a "winnable" nuclear war.

With the Soviet Union just a memory, it seems outrageous that a group of men actively planned a nuclear holocaust. But it's true. The Reagan White House was home to ideological extremists who used government agencies to concoct plans for pre-emptive war and justified it in terms of "good and evil." (Sound familiar?)

After assuming office in 1981, Reagan said, "Yes, there could be a limited nuclear war in Europe." Secretary of State Alexander Haig added that year: "We have contingency plans to fire a [nuclear] warning shot at the Soviet Union, warning of U.S. intentions to begin a nuclear war."

Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev responded, "Even the use of one nuclear bomb would inevitably lead to an all-out nuclear exchange."

This didn't stop the Reagan administration. According to *The New York Times*, Reagan approved a National Security Decision Document in late 1981 that committed the United States to fighting and winning a nuclear war against the Soviets. The plan envisioned the two sides lobbing hydrogen bombs at each other for up to six months.

Of course with two adversaries armed with tens of thousands of nukes, there could be no winner. The only question was: would humanity even survive?

The Reagan faithful claim he was just employing the "madman strategy" of trying to make the Soviets believe he was capable of anything, but that the nuclear bomb rattling was all bluff and swagger.

Yet, Reagan had a hard time distinguishing fantasy from reality – twice telling Israeli leaders that he helped liberate Nazi death camps when he spent the war in Hollywood. Even *Newsweek's* recent hagiography admits: "He invented stories

and then believed them. He thought trees produced pollution, confusing carbon dioxide with carbon monoxide. Welfare was bad because of a mysterious Chicago 'welfare queen' who drove a Cadillac while on relief."

Reagan believed in biblical armageddon. When asked about this during the 1984 presidential debates, Reagan replied, "Yes, Armageddon could come the day after tomorrow." He used apocalyptic language, describing the Soviet Union as an "Evil Empire" in 1983.

And don't forget that Chief of Staff Donald Regan revealed the Reagans consulted astrologers before making major policy decisions. Reagan was a commonplace nut, but one with his finger on the big red button. In 1984, he said on live radio that he had signed legislation outlawing Russia, announcing, "We begin bombing in five minutes."

The Soviets responded to this "joke" by putting their nuclear forces on alert.

Bellicose pronouncements by Reagan-era officials were matched by a massive arms buildup, a new generation of nuclear weapons and the positioning of nuclear-armed cruise missiles in Europe just minutes away from the USSR's heartland. This led Soviet leaders to believe that the United States was intent on a first strike.

And it was. In 1981 Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger warned, "During the 1950s and 1960s we had a first-strike capability.... Now we have got to regain it."

The Reagan administration engaged in macabre scheming. Plans were drafted for the IRS to continue collecting taxes in the post-nuclear apocalypse (so much for ending big government), while the Post Office would deliver the mail. Civil defense included "Crisis Relocation Planning" to evacuate American cities a week before the start of a nuclear war.

T.K. Jones, who was Reagan's under secretary of defense for nuclear forces, was a prime example of the insanity. *The Los Angeles Times* quoted him in January 1982 arguing all



Americans would survive "if there are enough shovels to go around... Dig a hole, cover it with a couple of doors and then throw three feet of dirt on top. It's the dirt that does it."

Cold War historian Martin Walker writes that by 1983, "Reagan's loose talk about fighting and winning nuclear war" had so frightened the Soviets that they believed a NATO exercise that November was "in fact not an exercise at all but an actual Western nuclear strike against the Soviet Union." During the exercise "the Soviets put their military forces on alert and prepared for a Western strike."

The threats did have one positive effect: catalyzing a nuclear disarmament movement among Americans and Europeans. Massive rallies and outright resistance forced the Reagan administration to tone down its belligerence.

Nonetheless, the danger Reagan posed is hard to overstate. Stoking fear in the Soviets might have led them to strike preemptively if they decided the U.S. was about to launch a sneak attack. Ironically, the "Evil Empire" proved to be more rational than the Americans. Confronted with economic decline, the Soviets chose Mikhail Gorbachev to peacefully negotiate with the West, instead of seeking a military confrontation.

There was an opportunity at the close of the Cold War to do away with nuclear weapons. But Reagan's legacy is found in our warped values that prize weapons of mass destruction as the guarantors of peace, leaving the nuclear sword still dangling over our heads.

## HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE

# LEGACY LUNACY

What's in a name? Apparently, for ardent supporters of Ronald Reagan, a revisionist, messianic mission. Just in case you haven't heard enough about the Gipper over the past weeks, a group of wealthy right-wingers hopes to imprint it on the psychic and physical map of the United States for decades to come.

By ISHAAN THAROOR

**S**pearheaded by Grover Norquist, notorious anti-tax zealot and founder of Americans for Tax Reform – a right-wing lobby advocating low taxes and small government – the Reagan Legacy Project hopes to rename monuments, airports, national parks, historical landmarks, and even calendar days in honor of the former President.

In a statement released following Reagan's death, Norquist announced that his organization intended to work "toward one significant monument named after [Reagan] in each of America's 50 states, as well as some dedication in every county in America." That would amount to 3,067 separate dedications.

Already, the project has succeeded in re-baptizing 60 sites,

including Washington, D.C.'s International Airport and a mountain in New Hampshire. Dismayed that Reagan's face may not be carved next to Mount Rushmore's other dead white men, Norquist and some South Dakota legislators want to christen the highway leading up to the site with Reagan's name.

The project seeks to place Reagan's face on the \$10 bill and designate Feb. 6 – the Gipper's birthday – as "Ronald Reagan Day," a proposal already ratified in 29 state legislatures.

It also plans to encourage similar re-namings and memorials abroad. Every former Communist country, argues Norquist, ought to have some dedication to the man who liberated them from "evil tyranny."

Thus far, the tiny island of Grenada – which Reagan invaded in 1983 – has issued a commemorative Reagan stamp collection.



Right-wing think tanks have been on the warpath ever since a 1996 *New York Times Magazine* survey ranked Reagan as "average," according to *Mother Jones* magazine. Soon after, Norquist initiated the project with backing from conservative organizations like the Heritage Foundation.

For Heritage president Edwin Feulner Reagan worship knows few bounds. "[In the Heritage Foundation,] pictures and portraits of him hang in the hallways, and many staffers have set up little shrines to him in their offices where they're free to pray several times a day."

The quest to preserve and glorify Reagan's name has even moved Nordquist to quip, "Just because conservatives hate government doesn't mean we won't use taxpayer money to honor the 40th President."

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NEW PALTZ MAYOR OFF THE HOOK FOR QUEER WEDDINGS

New Paltz Mayor Jason West was cleared on June 10 of criminal charges, brought against him by Ulster County DA Donald Williams, for solemnizing over 20 same-sex marriages on Feb. 27. New Paltz Town Court Justice Jonathan Katz dismissed the charges, arguing that the state had failed to demonstrate a legitimate interest in banning same-sex marriages. Katz also questioned the constitutionality of the law against performing same-sex marriages. "We must ever be on our guard, lest we erect our prejudices into legal principles," stated Katz in his ruling. The DA plans to appeal the ruling.

## ANTI-TORTURE ACTIVIST CLEARED OF CHARGES

Charges have been dropped against 21-year-old Joe Previtera, who was arrested on May 26 posing as an Iraqi prisoner outside a military recruiting station in Boston. Previtera stood on a milk crate dressed in a black hood and shawl, with wires dangling from his hands, in imitation of one of the notorious Abu Ghraib torture photos released last month. Prosecutors had charged Previtera with disturbing the peace, making a false bomb threat, and possessing a hoax device. Previtera explained, "I did this hoping that the image of an abused Iraqi prisoner might make people think twice about joining the military ... both for their own safety and because of the abuses they might be asked to commit."

## FLORIDA DENIES VOTE TO EVEN THE RE-ENFRANCHISED

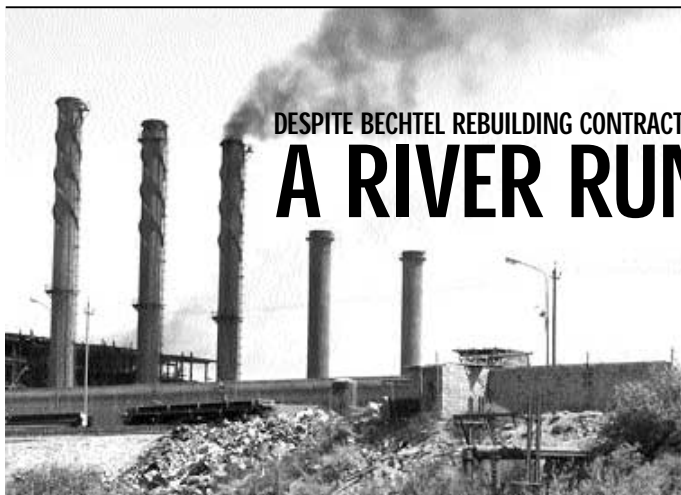
The voting rights of 25,585 Floridians with felony convictions have been officially restored through clemency grants or pardons, but unless the names of those individuals are removed from a state's "felon match" list they will be denied a vote in this year's presidential election, the New York-based Brennan Center for Justice found in a report released last week. A University of Minnesota report in 2001 showed that more than 600,000 Floridians have lost their voting rights due to felony convictions (not including those still in prison, on parole or on probation), including one out of every four black men.

## ...AND ADMITS SOFTWARE FLAW MAY PROHIBIT MANUAL RECOUNTS

In yet another worrying sign on the electronic voting front, the Florida Secretary of State has admitted that a software flaw in 11 of the state's voting machines could make manual recounts impossible in November's presidential election. "These are minor technical hiccups that happen," said state spokeswoman Nicole DeLara. "No votes are lost, or could be lost."

At the same time, Florida elections chief, Ed Kast, abruptly resigned Monday, saying he wanted a "change of pace."

**DEBATE THE NEWS**  
nyc.indymedia.org



**FREE TO POLLUTE:** Waste and garbage from this Baghdad area refinery make their way directly into the Tigris. PHOTO: DAHR JAMAIL/NEWSTANDARD

By DAHR JAMAIL

Baghdad, Iraq—With reconstruction of a highly inadequate water treatment and distribution system at a near standstill throughout much of Central Iraq, some residents of Baghdad are left with little choice but to drink highly polluted water from the Tigris River. Aside from a newly formed Iraqi non-governmental organization that is focusing on the cleanup of one section of the river, not much is being done to improve Baghdad residents' access to potable water, and US contractors appear unable or unwilling to help.

While many areas of Baghdad have access to drinking water from a few of the functional treatment plants, millions of residents remain without a clean, reliable source. All too many of these unfortunates turn to the rotten banks of the Tigris, which snakes prominently through the heart of Baghdad, collecting toxins as it flows.

Abdul Salam Abdulali works on the river, running a dredging machine. A river man for most of his life, he has long been employed by a company that dredges the muddy Tigris, but which was recently incorporated into the Ministry of Water Resources.

"I am married to the water," he said standing atop his dredging machine as it floated atop the river. "But it is too polluted now. I wish I could eat the fish, but when I cut them open I can smell the oil."

Sadr City shopkeeper Ranzi Amher Aziz joined a chorus of voices protesting the lack of potable water in this Baghdad slum. "The situation here is worse now than before the war," he said, echoing others' complaints.

Many here say they cannot see any sign of the US making an effort to help. Aziz stood near a pool of raw sewage in the street. "There has been no work here by the Americans to give us clean water or fix the sewage problem," he said.

Tigris River water is a concentrated cocktail of pesticides, fertilizers, oil, gasoline and heavy metals, reports Dr. Husni Mohammed, an Iraqi who holds a PhD in Environmental and Biological Science and has researched the condition of the Tigris. Raw sewage mixes with particles from antiquated piping and US-fired depleted uranium munitions, he says, plus remnants from untold amounts of other chemicals released by American and Iraqi weaponry used since the 1991 Gulf War.

Adding to the hazards, very few sewage treatment plants in Baghdad are operational. Raw waste from the city of five million residents can be pumped through the sewer system, completely bypassing any treatment, and flow right into the river.

Statistics underscore the widespread suffering of Iraqis. The incidence of diarrheal diseases, such as typhoid, dysentery and cholera, doubled between August 2002, before the US-led invasion, and a year later, reported the

DESPITE BECHTEL REBUILDING CONTRACT, IRAQI WATER QUALITY WORSENS

# A RIVER RUNS RANCID

Kareem's sentiments. Awshalim Khammo recently quit his job in frustration after working to clean up the areas of the CPA near the Tigris. "I tried all last year to help improve the Palace ground and the river side within the Green Zone, but things went from bad to worse," he said. Khammo complained in particular about dumping — which he referred to as a "disaster" — near the Kellogg Brown & Root warehouse and yards on the east end of the presidential palace.

Bechtel Corporation was awarded a no-bid, cost-plus-fixed-fee contract on April 17, 2003 worth \$680 million. The controversial contract made Bechtel and its subcontractors responsible for the rehabilitation of the Shakh Dijlah water treatment plant in Baghdad, as well as the Kerkh Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Repeated contacts with various authorities in charge of civilian press access to water treatment projects yielded no invitations to verify progress made on any Baghdad area water treatment facilities.

The brochure produced by Bechtel to highlight its work in Iraq concerning the drinking water situation only gives a concrete finishing date for two projects, one of which is the rehabilitation and capacity-building of the Shakh Dijlah plant.

Work on the plant, Bechtel's number two priority in Baghdad since June 2003, is expected to increase potable water by 225 million liters per day. The work was due to be completed by this month.

Dr. Abdul Latif Rashid, the Minister for Water Resources in Iraq, told the BBC that the poor state of Iraq's infrastructure and past mismanagement are to blame for some of the water problems Iraqis are now facing.

The U.N.'s OCHA report spread the blame more broadly: "Three wars and 13 years of sanctions, as well as the Coalition invasion and the looting that followed it, have dealt a heavy blow to the country's already creaking water system."

This article originally appeared in The New Standard, <http://newstandardnews.net>.



**DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE:** The remains of a cow decompose on the banks of the Tigris near Baghdad, a major and often direct source of water for the city's residents.

PHOTO: DAHR JAMAIL/NEWSTANDARD

KURDISH LEADERS FURIOUS, BUT SISTANI IS THE BIG WINNER

# IRAQ'S FAILED STATE

The United Nations Security Council on June 8 unanimously approved a new resolution on Iraq granting legitimacy to the caretaker government of Iyad Allawi.

BY JUAN COLE

The resolution gives the new Iraqi government substantially more sovereignty than had been envisaged by the U.S. in the initial draft and the Bush administration essentially compromised in order to have an achievement for the election season.

The resolution will make it easier for the Allawi government to gain the Iraq seat at the U.N. and at organizations like the Arab League. It also constrains the U.S. from undertaking major military actions (like Fallujah) without extensive consultation with the Iraqi government and establishes a joint committee of U.S. and Iraqi representatives to carry out those discussions. This military "partnership" was substituted successfully for a stricter French proposal that the Iraqi government have a veto over U.S. military movements in Iraq. Still, the language went far beyond what the U.S. had wanted.

That the U.S. and the U.K. had to give away so much to get the resolution shows how weak they are in Iraq. They have created a failed state in Iraq and this new piece of paper really changes nothing on the ground.

The resolution did not mention or endorse the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), or interim constitution, adopted last February by the interim Governing Council and based on the notes of Paul Bremer. The Shiite leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, had written Kofi Annan forbidding the U.N. from endorsing the TAL, on the grounds that it was illegitimate and contained provisions harmful to majority rule.

The Kurds on the other hand were furious that the U.N. did not mention the TAL, which they see as their safeguard against a tyranny of the Arab majority. It stipulates that the status quo will remain in Kurdistan until an elected Parliament crafts a permanent constitution in a year and that the three Kurdish provinces will have a veto over that new constitution if they do not like it. The Kurdish leaders threatened in a letter to President George W. Bush on Sunday to boycott the elections this winter if there is any move to curtail their sovereignty or to rescind or amend the interim constitution. As a result, the Kurdish street is anxious about the future, feeling insecure and deserted.

The entire process was a big win for Sistani. It is now often forgotten that the Bush administration had had no intention of involving the U.N. in this way in Iraq. The original plan was to have stage-managed, council-based elections in May, producing a new government to which sovereignty would be handed over by the U.S. directly.

It was Sistani who derailed those plans as undemocratic. When the involvement of the U.N. was first broached last winter by Governing Council members, the Americans were said to have been "extremely offended."

Sistani is not a secularist by any stretch of the imagination. If he gets what he wants, religious law will have a vast influence on Iraqi society and politics, and women's rights will be rolled back. On the other hand, Sistani

is not a dictator or a Khomeinist. He is much more analogous to Jerry Falwell in the U.S. – a major religious voice who wants to move the society in a certain direction through weakening the separation of religion and state, without himself seeking political office.

The most significant concern is Sistani's completely unsympathetic stance toward Kurdish demands for safeguards as a minority, and his desire to remove their veto on the new constitution. The potential for Kurdish-Shiite violence is substantial in the coming years.

*Juan Cole is professor of modern Middle Eastern and South Asian history at the University of Michigan. His website is [www.juancole.com](http://www.juancole.com). Excerpted from The Daily Star (Lebanon).*

GRAND AYATOLLAH ALI SISTANI'S cautious approach is paying off.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### CHIAPAS INDIGENOUS ACTIVIST MURDERED

On Monday, June 7, Zapatista Eduardo Vázquez Alvaro was murdered in broad daylight in the middle of Chilón's city center. The 50-year-old indigenous activist spent several years in Cerro Hueco prison and is known there for his role in the Zapatista prisoner organization "The voice of Cerro Hueco." Alvaro was attacked by five men who shot him three times and then attacked him with a machete as he lay on the ground. The men then drove their cars over his lifeless body. Hundreds of Zapatistas and sympathizers gathered to protest the murder. They charge that Chiapan landowners were behind Alvaro's death.

### CANADIAN TREE-SITTERS

On June 1, police and private guards arrived at the site of a tree sit in Hamilton, Ontario, and threatened to arrest supporters on the ground, forcing them to leave. Three people had occupied trees in the Red Hill Valley, hoping to stop a six-lane expressway that would be built through the park. The city of Hamilton admits that some 44,000 trees would be cut down and 22 archaeological sites impacted in the valley, which is part of the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve. On June 13, environmentalists struck back. A group of 75 people marched to site, overwhelming six private guards, and managed to re-supply the two remaining tree-sitters.

For more information, Friends of Red Hill Valley website, [www.hwc.org/link/forhv](http://www.hwc.org/link/forhv)

o b i t u a r y

### AUSSIE INDYMEDIA PIONEER, DEAD AT 33



#### Michael Patrick Carlton aka Predator

In 1997, Predator helped set up Catalyst, a community tech collective in Sydney, Australia. They went on to provide information technology services for a wide range of activist and community-based organizations around both Sydney and Australia. In the process, knowledge was shared, and skills were learned and taught – from building and maintaining hardware to writing computer code. It was from this original initiative that an open-posting model of web publishing was developed for the internationally organized "J18" protest in 1999. The code base was named "Active" and went on to power the first Indymedia site. As they say, the rest is history.

However, Predator's influence extended further. An Urban Explorer, he was a part of the Cave Clan – whose membership extends around Australia and internationally – and founded the Sydney Cave clan branch. Over the years the tribe has explored thousands of miles of underground passageways, drains, mines and other components of the urban vasculature. Predator was also a dumpster diver, anarcho-syndicalist, molecular biologist, squatter and well-known good guy.

Even with the realization that he had cancer, Predator did not stop, but continued to play an active role in all spheres of his life – until the very end. Predator is dead, but his legacy lives on. —[sydney.indymedia.org](http://sydney.indymedia.org)



# REVIEWS

## CULTURE, POLICS AND CRITICISM

### ARAB MEDIA SCHOOLS THE WORLD

CONTROL ROOM  
Dir. Jehane Noujaim  
87 minutes

For Jehane Noujaim, a 29-year-old Egyptian-American filmmaker now living in Brooklyn, timing was everything. Noujaim arrived in Qatar two weeks before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and in the course of filming, gained access to both the backrooms of Al-Jazeera and U.S. Central Command, or Centcom, the Pentagon's media center. The result is *Control Room*, a documentary examining the inner workings of Al-Jazeera, that hit theaters nationwide on June 11 after a successful opening in New York.

*Control Room* is a must see if for no other reason than it provides an alternative lens to the ethics governing news, especially in relation to Al-Jazeera. The Qatar-based news channel is often maligned by the Bush Administration for broadcasting news that is characterized as "not factual," "nationalist" and in the words of Donald Rumsfeld – "Osama Bin Laden's mouthpiece."

Early on, Noujaim introduces the audience to the primary figures of the film – Hassan Ibrahim, a former BBC reporter from the Sudan and Samir Kahder, Al-Jazeera's senior producer. Both Ibrahim and Kahder resemble 1940s film noir characters, punctuating opinions with each new cigarette they light.

"You are the most powerful nation on earth; you can crush everyone, but don't ask us to love it as well," Ibrahim says between inhalations, while he both praises the United States for being a liberal democracy and condemns its policies in the Middle East.

Among the film's major themes is Al-Jazeera's unwavering commitment to showing the consequences of war – which Secretary of State Colin Powell claimed was jeopardizing reconstruction efforts in Iraq. No wonder, since Al-Jazeera's war-time images, beamed to 40 million Arab households worldwide, have shown viewers that there is no such thing as a sterile or bloodless war.

Noujaim uses footage from Al-Jazeera showing dead and wounded Iraqis and pairs this with reports by U.S. newscasters touting the amazing abilities of the Pentagon, often from reporters in full "embedded" combat gear.

Some of the Al-Jazeera footage has never been aired before by U.S. media and, at times, is difficult to

watch: a dead boy's intestines spayed on a hospital sheet; an Iraqi woman in front of her bombed-out house yelling "If this is Bush's democracy, then we don't want it!"

But, Noujaim does not proselytize. She peppers the images with commentary from unlikely sources, like CNN reporter Tom Mintier. In one moment, Mintier expresses his anger at the media frenzy behind the rescue of Pvt. Jessica Lynch in the film. Commenting on what was essentially a blackout of battlefield developments as U.S. forces entered Baghdad, Mintier says, "They're burying the leads."

One of the more fortunate turns of events for Noujaim is meeting Centcom press liaison, Lt. Josh Rushing who worked as a U.S. military script supervisor for Hollywood prior to coming to Qatar.

Rushing is a surprisingly complex character who proves to be a good listener to Arab concerns about the war, while being a willing participant in the "U.S. liberation of the Iraqi people."

During one exchange, Ibrahim grills the youthful lieutenant about the realities of military occupation, revealing Rushing's naiveté about imposing democracy on Iraqis "Democratize or we'll shoot," says Rushing in the exchange.

The movie is strongest when it challenges the sanitized images fed to Americans during the invasion. One example, the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad, emerges as anything but a clear-cut demonstration of Iraqi joy for the ousting of the former dictator.

Another is the U.S. military's bombing of a building in Baghdad housing Al-Jazeera staff, which killed Palestinian-Jordanian journalist, Tariq Ayoub. The Pentagon later called the incident "an unfortunate accident."

The scene of Ayoub waiting atop the building motionless and frightened on live television minutes before his death is a surreal moment that will raise questions about how he died. (It is revealed in the film that Al-Jazeera's executive director gave the U.S. State Department specific coordinates of the location of its reporters throughout Iraq, including Tariq's.)

*Control Room* raises difficult questions about media responsibility during wartime. Keep an eye out for the upcoming P.O.V. special that will air on PBS stations July 6, "War Feels Like War." Directed by Spanish filmmaker Esteban Uyarra, the documentary offers another take on the non-embedded or "unilateral" journalists covering the war.

—Jackson Allers

### THE SORROWS OF EMPIRE

Militarism, imperialism and an inbred elite have brought the American Republic to the end of its rope, says Chalmers Johnson.

A popular singer takes center stage at the Super Bowl to perform the national anthem. She is escorted by the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, while four fighter planes roar overhead. A decorated war hero runs for President and is denounced as a traitor for his youthful opposition to a disastrous colonial war he fought in 35 years earlier. The Pentagon demands Congress supply another \$25 billion (on top of the \$450 billion plus per year it is already receiving) to fund the war in Iraq, without bothering to itemize its projected expenses. A modified version of this measure passes the U.S. Senate by a vote of 95-0.

These are among the countless examples of runaway militarism in American life that form the backdrop to Chalmers Johnson's latest book, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*. In *Sorrows*, Johnson traces the rise of the American empire and the far-flung military establishment that currently garrisons it with bases in over 130 countries worldwide.

A sense of sadness and loss permeates this book. Washington elites dream of leading a 21st century Rome. But for Johnson, longtime Japan expert, former spook and author of the eerily prophetic *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (published in 2000), the quest for world domination is a mortal threat to whatever shreds of Constitutional government still remain in this country – and is ultimately self-defeating.

"Rome," he notes, "ruled all the known world except China, but in the process Roman democracy was supplanted by dictatorship, and eventually the Romans were overwhelmed by the world of enemies they had created. To the very end Roman armies pretended to speak for the 'Senate and the Roman people' and paraded under the banner with the Latin initials SPQR (Senatus Populusque Romanus). But the days when the Senate mattered were long past; empire had become an end in itself."

— John Tarleton

### interview: Mark Achbar

Director of 'The Corporation' & 'Manufacturing Consent'

Despite being the top-grossing Canadian documentary ever, *Manufacturing Consent*, an exploration of Noam Chomsky's media control theories, has never aired on a commercial network or major cable station in the United States. His latest film, *The Corporation*, has already surpassed *Manufacturing Consent*'s success in his homeland, but don't strain your eyes looking for this one in *TV Guide*, either.

The film's theme – that the corporation is a psychopath –

might make advertisers a little squeamish. So while *The Corporation* has triumphed at film festivals around the globe, including an Audience Award win at Sundance, the only way to see it in the US is during its limited summer tour of selected cities.

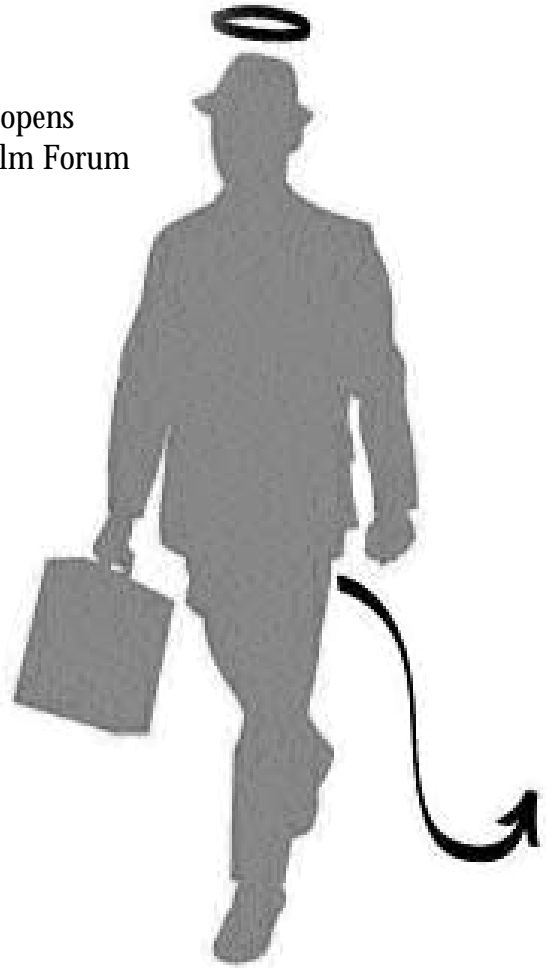
Achbar's conclusions aren't without their detractors. Between clips of early newsreels, corporate propaganda films and explosive free trade summit footage, high-ranking (and invariably smiling) business figures such as the CEO of Goodyear, the former chairman of Shell, and Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman give their opinions on capitalism (lest the right wing call the progressives unfair). Critics like Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Michael Moore face off in the other corner, but the clash is transparent. Corporations value profits above life. Here,

Achbar discusses some of the issues raised in *The Corporation* and solutions to reforming a dominating and amoral system.

*History has humbled every formerly dominant institution from the Roman Empire to communism. You've said that the corporation is unlikely to become the first to defy history, but with globalization, corporations are becoming more pervasive and powerful than ever. Is a reversal of this trend likely any time soon?*

MA: I'm starting to see a groundswell of people no longer willing to acknowledge the legitimacy of the institution. If you would've said that the Berlin Wall was going to fall, two years before it did, nobody would have believed you. There comes a tipping point, and you never know when it's going to happen... but you get a

## The Corporation opens June 30 at the Film Forum



sense of things. There's certainly been a move towards reform. There's more of a consciousness of the institution itself, and this film is a part of that growing consciousness.

*But corporate ideology is so inescapable, as if this system were a foregone conclusion and there are no alternatives. How do you get outside this envelopment to get a critical detachment?*

MA: You go see this movie (laughs). It's very hard to escape unless you move to an island, and even then airplanes are going to fly overhead and stuff is going to wash up on your beach, so I don't think escape is a goal. We need to diminish the harmful effects of industry or we might not have a world to debate the modern business structure.

*Well, the film shows the public outcry when it was revealed that little kids in Honduran sweatshops were making the clothes for Wal-Mart's Kathy Lee Gifford line, and Kathy Lee apologized and stood up for these kids, but Wal-Mart still exploits cheap labor and they haven't crumbled. It seems like America demands more accountability from its celebrities than its corporations.*

MA: Kathy Lee's public image matters to her a lot – and I think she genuinely cares about how kids are treated – so it made strategic sense to expose her, because she had to respond. She's the human face of one aspect of the WalMart brand, so they made her publicly accountable. Wal-Mart can deflect bad publicity, because it's so huge, but when Kathy Lee takes a hit, she's got to come up with some answers.

*So how can the public work towards increasing corporate accountability?*

MA: Demanding progressive legislation from politicians is a good start. With all the deregulation that's been lobbied for, look at how the Bush administration has systematically reduced constraints on air polluters. It's a case study in the film's thesis, because the euphemisms used to justify it are stunning in their duplicity. It's Orwellian – good is bad, black is white, and the Clean Air Act puts more pollution in the air. But accountability can start locally. The film shows Arcata, California, doing this, and there's a community near Minneapolis that's trying to pass a law saying, "Officers of

corporations have a duty to make money for their shareholders, but not at the expense of human rights, the environment, etc."

*But how do you enforce the well-intentioned legislation that manages to get passed? Sam Gibara (Chairman and former CEO of Goodyear) seems to be taunting the public in the movie when he says, "Governments are powerless compared to where they were before." When breaking the law is profitable, corporations are notorious for simply paying fines for violations. The film even shows how 57 U.S. multinationals were fined in one week for trading with officially recognized enemy states, but they just write a check and it's back to business as usual. This seems ludicrous, because under California's Three Strikes law, for example, repeat offenders can get 20 years for stealing a candy bar, so why aren't corporations held to the same standards?*

MA: There's actually people like Robert Benson at UCLA who advocate Three Strikes legislation for corporations. I think the problem is a question of equality, like with these "triple P's" (Public-Private Partnerships). They can be good, we certainly wouldn't have got this film made without the (Canadian) government, but industry wants to be perceived as an equal. They should be subordinate to the government and the public, not the other way around.

*In some cases, like certain aspects of biotechnology shown in the film, where corporations have begun patenting living organisms and discoveries relating to the human genetic sequence, there doesn't seem to be much of a question as to who's writing the rules. What are the implications of these developments?*

MA: I'm not an expert in that field, but I just find it deeply offensive that some corporation has any claim to my genetic make-up. It's morally repugnant that they're divvying up the genetic commons. We need to find another system of incentives to allow the research to be done. I'm not saying, "Let's all be Luddites and not explore how to cure diseases," but there must be a system of public ownership and management of these research facilities.

*What about universities?*

MA: Maybe, or it could be an international body or a section of the UN.

*The film paints a very negative picture of privatization, from the genetic patenting to the revolts in Bolivia against Bechtel's ownership of the water supply (including rain), but some public institutions are so bureaucratic and inefficient. Could-n't privatization benefit, say, American public schools?*

MA: That's a tough question, but it seems to me that the incentives are all wrong. What do you do if a school isn't profitable? Shut it down? That could be pretty disruptive and the children could suffer greatly. Call me old-fashioned, but there's just something not right about the public education system being manipulated for profit.

*But isn't this already happening?*

MA: Well, there's the infiltration of schools by advertising, with McDonald's serving lunches, etc. Then there are actual for-profit schools that are owned by publicly traded corporations. This means that their principle motivating force has to be profit, which seems to clash with what it should be – education.

*What about the theory that says what's best for the market is best for the people?*

MA: I think the inequalities in society today prove that market forces need a little regulation. In theory, the invisible hand will take care of companies that completely stomp on their workers, because people won't work there, but workers are desperate, so they do. *Parecon* by Michael Albert is about participatory economics. It's completely different model for seeing how an economy could be run, and under what principles, and how to get the things we value enshrined in an economy.

I think it's a model worth considering- or at least discussing. I'm not smart enough to design an alternative society, but it has to come as a result of the democratic process. It's important that there are some people who are thinking forward and trying to conceive of a system that's not what used to be called communism and takes the best things in terms of allocation and use of markets and put it together in a humane, equitable way promotes good values. We need to keep our humanity intact.

— Liam O'Donoghue

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